

## **Closing Coal Plant May Better Canyon Views**

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PHOENIX -- Scientists at the Grand Canyon plan to spend the next few years measuring air quality to see whether the closure of an aging coal-fired power plant improves the views.

The Mohave Generating Station in southern Nevada closed Dec. 31 rather than meet a court-ordered deadline to install pollution-control measures estimated to cost \$1.1 billion.

The plant opened in 1971 and has been blamed for degrading views in the western Grand Canyon.

"More than any other park, people go there for the scenic views," said Mark Wenzler, director of the clean air program for the National Parks Conservation Association. "It's amazing how much those views are muted by the pollution."

Because of changing weather patterns, it will take years to assess any difference, said Carl Bowman, an air quality specialist for Grand Canyon National Park.

"With a pollution contribution of that size, the weather conditions may accentuate or mask it," he said. "It'll take anywhere from three to five years to really see what the trend is."

A 1999 consent decree won by environmental groups required the 1,580-megawatt plant to upgrade pollution controls or close by Jan. 1 this year.

The plant, in Nevada about 100 miles west of the canyon, had repeatedly violated the Clean Air Act and contributed to the haze, the groups charged.

The pollution was most severe closer to the plant and was worse in the summer, Bowman said.

The last study on the plant's impact on the canyon was done in 1998. It showed that during the worst summertime pollution days, the plant contributed anywhere from 2.5 to 16 percent of the pollution near the canyon's west side.

The plant provided Southern California Edison, which serves about 13 million people, with 7 percent of its electricity. Because of other power sources, customers will not be immediately affected, the utility said.

The plant had also faced expiring coal and water contracts with the Navajo and Hopi tribes and with Peabody Coal Co.

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